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Los Angeles ranks second to Mexico City in the population concentration of persons of Mexican descent. Thus Spanish-speaking Americans in the Los Angeles region represent a significant and important segment of the total population. The different cultural background of the Mexican-American requires special treatment in the schools. School administrators should recognize the educational implementations necessary to the acculturation process, which would result in a more dynamic and functional curricula.

An increasing number of Mexican-Americans is evident in the professions; many are leaders in the fields of business and government. However, the great preponderance of Mexican-Americans are in the lowest economic strata. There is a recognition of Mexican-American employment problems and a beginning of community effort to alleviate them.

Much of the housing occupied by Mexican-Americans is segregated and substandard. The population in segregated areas is increasing in density with resulting behavioral and health problems.

Health services are fragmented. The effectiveness of these services is hindered by language barriers, impatience, indifference, hostility, and lack of understanding.

Though great strides have been made, particularly within the past ten years, serious lags exist in the utilization of the Mexican-American potential.

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THE MEXICAN AMERICAN IN THE LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
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One out of every nine persons in the Los Angeles region in 1963 bears a Spanish surname. Americans of Mexican descent make up most of the population, but other persons of Spanish-speaking background come from Central and South America; Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Spain.

The fabulous history of the Southwestern part of the United States is richly endowed with the heritage of Mexico and Spain. California's recorded history tells us about the early Spanish settlers and their deep influence in the social, economic, cultural and political life of its people throughout the past several hundred years.

From Santa Ana to the south and Ventura to the north, it is estimated that there are some 1,250,000 persons with Spanish surnames, including some 850,000 persons of Mexican descent; some 25,000 Cuban refugees and an estimated 4,500 Puerto Ricans.

It has been an established fact for sometime that Los Angeles ranks second only to Mexico City in the entire world in population concentration of persons of Mexican descent.

Thus, it is quite obvious that Spanish-speaking Americans in the Los Angeles region represent a significant and important segment of the total population. The area east of the Los Angeles River has long been recognized as the port-of-entry for most persons of Mexican descent coming from Mexico, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and other states.

WHO ARE THEY?

When speaking of persons of Mexican descent, it is important to keep in mind that there are different groupings which make up this large segment of the population represented by the periods of entry to the Los Angeles region.

Early California Families:

The descendants of the early California families are well known today. They include such names as the Sepulvedas, the Figueroas, the

Carillos, the Alvarados, and the Dominguez'. Their imprint in the history of California is permanent.

Political Refugees of the Mexican Revolution:

Thousands of political refugees from Mexico migrated to California beginning in 1910. They came seeking a more tranquil and productive way of life. A great number of them remained in this country, but many of them returned to Mexico, particularly during the early 30's -- the depression years.

World War I "Newcomers":

World War I created an influx of thousands of Mexican nationals into the United States. A great number of them came to California because of availability of jobs in the harvest of fruits and vegetables. They immediately filled a dire need for harvest workers and greatly aided the war effort. They came primarily from six states in Southwestern Mexico characterized chiefly by agricultural activities.

Second and Third Generations:

The sons and daughters of the World War I newcomers composed new generations of Mexican Americans. Thousands upon thousands of them joined the Armed Forces during World War II and served with honor and distinction as documented by the Los Angeles author, Raul Morin, in his book - "Among the Valiant." In the Korean conflict, too, Mexican Americans saw distinguished service, as noted by Morin.

World War II "Braceros":

Tends of thousands of "Braceros" or Mexican farm workers came to the United States during World War II to help out in agricultural work under contract through the Mexican government. Many of them married American women and remained in this country. Many of

them have obtained their American citizenship, while others are known as "Green Card" holders. The "Green Cards" represent their credentials as permanent U. S. residents.

"Tejanos":

From the State of Texas, there has been an influx of what may be called in Spanish - "Tejanos" or Texas Mexicans, or, Latin Americans, as they generally call themselves in Texas. Many of these migrants are known to work in crop harvests. They speak Spanish mostly. Many of them live in "barrios" where a limited amount of English is spoken. They attend the Spanish-speaking theatres and churches. They listen to the Spanish language radio and television programs. They read the Spanish language press. They are not generally recognized as "joiners." They are not actively engaged in community and civic activities, but they do participate in many social and recreational activities.

"Hispanos" from New Mexico:

Tracing their ancestry to the early "Conquistadores" of Spain, the "Hispanos" or Spanish Americans are a significant segment of the Spanish-speaking population of Los Angeles. Such family names as Roybal, Tafoya, Montoya, and Baca trace their history back to the early settlers of New Mexico.

Cuban Refugees:

Having been selected as a relocation center for Cuban refugees, Los Angeles has experienced an increased amount of migration of thousands of Cuban refugees, particularly through Miami, Florida. Protestant and Catholic groups have served as sponsors for these families. Plane loads of them have arrived at International Airport throughout the past year and a half.

Puerto Ricans

For the past several years, there has been a noticeable influx of

Puerto Ricans from New York, Chicago, and the industrial areas of Ohio. There are several "barrios" or neighborhoods in the Los Angeles area where there are concentrations of Puerto Ricans. Recently, the Office of Labor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico through a Field Representative from New York City surveyed the Los Angeles area as to the Puerto Rican population; their needs and problems, and what steps should be taken to assist them.

Cultural Background:

Perhaps, reference to the cultural background of persons of Mexican descent might be better understood, if his rural, or "folk culture," can be compared to our own urban culture.

Folk culture is different from urban culture. In the latter, new ideas are welcomed, people do what their neighbors do, rather than what their fathers have always done. Standards of behavior are different. Social responsibility and civic-mindedness are well known as essentially urban concepts.

American culture is based on the future. We insure for the future, educate ourselves for the future, take a job "with a future," save for the future, plan our lives in the future, get health examinations for future health, and so on.

When persons of Mexican descent have a folk-culture background, find themselves in a prevailing American culture which is highly urbanized, conflicts arise.

The cultural background of persons of Mexican descent is not always based on the future, but on the present. A person of Mexican descent can trace his background to the Mayan and Aztec civilizations. This makes him a very proud person.

American culture is based on organizations. We organize into groups, we organize our time, we organize our lives. We surrender our individuality to the interest of the group. We tend to give up our immediate desires in favor of a previous plan - even if our immediate desires make sense. We want to be governed by law, not by persons. We try to be objective.

The culture of Mexico is generally based on individuals. They sacrifice the group to the person. They prefer to improvise, and are very flexible. They scrap plans if something better shows up. Human and personal relationships are very important. Rules should be changed to fit each individual case. Impersonality and objectivity have no charms. Personal favors are expected. Planning, budgeting, teamwork on the basis of a plan does not always play an important role.

In the United States, the two sexes are on a fairly equal basis. In the culture of Mexico, the man is head of the household. The term "machismo" is often-times attributed to that trait in the Mexican male where he is the dominant figure in the family.

When this characteristic exists, it is the man - the husband - who generally decides if the wife is to attend a PTA meeting, or if she is to participate in a community or civic activity. Thus, because of his own indifference or aloofness, neither he, nor she, becomes actively involved in the community.

A child is raised to look after his parents and to make sacrifices for them in the culture of Mexico. Independence of the children is not always considered to be a good thing. The family takes first place, before the individual, and therefore, before the community or organizational responsibilities.

It can be readily seen that these cultural traits fit into and reinforce each other and often lead to attitudes which are condemned by Anglo-Americans as "shiftless," "spendthrift," "no ambition," "no civic-mindedness," "no sense of law," "not dependable," and "not punctual."

It also points up the need for taking time, being flexible, asking about members of the family. It should make it easier working with persons of Mexican descent if we understand the values which underlie the characteristics we deplore.

It should be strongly emphasized at this point that the cultural traits thus described are to serve merely as guides for understanding and should not be interpreted as firm and established. These are changing

times, and they are effecting the lives of everyone, persons or Mexican descent notwithstanding.

Because of the nature and the time of arrival to this area, persons of Mexican descent have been, and are, in various stages of being Americanized. Their individual traits will be modified and many of their cultural characteristics changed.

Significant and important strides have been made by persons of Mexican descent in the past several years in the social, economic, educational, and cultural life of the Los Angeles community.

Education is the most influential factor leading to this advancement. Spanish-surnames are found today among many fields of business, industrial and professional endeavor. Such names as Roybal, Teran, Diaz, Sanchez, and Moreno are prominent in the political and civic life of the community.

There is no question about the fact that the tide is turning. Men and women of Mexican descent are participating in community and civic affairs in greater numbers than ever before. Federal, state, county and city appointments to public office of persons of Mexican descent during the past two or three years have been remarkable. They were chosen on the basis of their abilities, and have been given recognition by the community for their contributions as citizens and as leaders of their respective communities.

Admittedly slow, but the tide is turning. For every successful man or woman of Mexican descent, there will be innumerable others who will be inspired and motivated to move ahead. They are not only cognizant of their rights and privileges, but are mindful of their obligations as citizens and residents of this country.

Education:

Numerous conferences have been held on the educational needs of Mexican Americans; philosophy has been clarified; plans have been laid; and new programs have been started. The Council of Mexican American Affairs conference in 1961 stressed the need for specialized counseling and guidance service in elementary and secondary schools,

after-school services for youths in need of special attention and work with parents having special needs. An Occidental College conference held in 1963, with the aid of the Rosenberg Foundation, heard Dr. Julian Samora of the University of Notre Dame report that the educational level of Spanish speaking students in the Southwest has advanced in ten years only one grade. The conference recommended that the school curriculum should include recognition of the cultural heritage of the Mexican American and that this is especially important in the primary grades where children face a new world and where permanent attitudes and work habits are formed.

A more detailed presentation of educational conditions and objectives was proposed for the Council of Mexican American Affairs by Mr. Marcos de Leon, as follows:

> "Throughout the Southwest, elements of the cultures peculiar to the United States and Mexico have thrown out constant and continuous circles of influence over one another for over a century. In every hamlet, village, town and city this rubbing of elbows of the two cultures, involving food, art, music, religion, architecture, clothing, language, ideas and attitudes, is actually occurring, albeit undirected, but serving a purpose that culture was meant to fulfill: adjustment and security to its members.
>
> "Those cultural traits representative of the Mexican area found in the curricula of the school are varied and sporadic, depending on the interest of the administrator and teaching personnel, as well as the experience and preparation of the latter: (1) Spanish is offered in some school systems at every possible level of instruction or included as an academic requirement, or not at all; (2) social studies units and courses in art, music, and home economics touch upon some of these elements in keeping with the conditions expressed above.
>
> "By and large, however, school administrators have failed to implement the educational implications of the acculturation process as a principle from which a more dynamic and functional curricula could be constructed.
>
> "The process by definition implies a concomitant influence on the personality of the Mexican American since by premise of the

educational problem he lives in a bicultural community. Therefore, if we are to utilize the community and its needs to formulate the school's program, elements of food, art, clothing, music, language and history, peculiar to the Mexican area, should be included in the curricula of those schools serving large numbers of Mexican Americans. In the average school program, one finds those cultural elements peculiar to the American scene composing principally the curricula, utilizing them to their fullest extent as the complete resource. This seemingly unimportant fact not only violates the best recommended procedures and methods for setting up specific objectives and thereby the construction of the curricula for a given community, but prohibits and circumvents the school from assuming its complete role and function as an educational institution for the community.

"This traditional approach expressing an authoritarian concept leaves very little leeway for anything but a frustrating and sometimes sterile learning situation.

"No one as yet has given answers to the following imponderables which everyone in the educational area, conscious of them or not, confront: (1) What should be the aim in view, the objectives, and goals of the educational process for the Mexican American; (2) What constitutes and comprises his cultural-environmental needs: (3) What influences does the interplay of all the cultural elements which surround him have upon the formation of his personality; (4) How can the school make the learning situation a more profitable and functional process when knowledge as to needs and causes of behavior patterns is entirely lacking; and (5) How can the school best evaluate this experience for diagnostic, remedial, and placement purposes with measuring devices which have been standardized on an entirely different cultural group?

"Literature on the subject is virtually not to be found. Any attempt, therefore, to clarify the doubt surrounding any or all of these important fields would have to be undertaken through experimental or "pilot" studies covering the status of each and practical recommendations should be forthcoming on the basis of the findings."

Employment:

Although an ever increasing number of Spanish surnames are now evident in the professions of law, medicine, education, architecture and social work, and many are leaders in the fields of business and government, the great preponderance of Mexican Americans are in the lowest economic strata of our community. There has been very little upgrading to white collar jobs with supervisorial responsibility.

Some industrial establishments have instituted in-plant training facilities and have encouraged Mexican American employees to take advantage of them; but these situations remain the exception to the general practice. The Fair Employment Practices Commission has remedied a number of abuses by discriminatory employers. The great unfilled need, however, is for an affirmative program of merit employment and for adequate vocational training.

Youth opportunities conferences have been held to raise horizons and to open higher employment levels. In 1962, a conference at Stevenson Junior High School was co-sponsored by the East Central Area Welfare Planning Council and the Department of Community Services of Los Angeles County; and specific projects were formulated. In the fall of 1963, the Youth Opportunities Board of Greater Los Angeles launched a Youth Training and Employment Project with funds supplied by the federal Manpower Development and Training Act. These are a recognition of Mexican-American employment problems and a beginning of community efforts to alleviate them.

Housing:

Much of the housing occupied by Mexican Americans is segregated and sub-standard.

"The Spanish-speaking people rent more than the 'Anglos'; they get less for their money, and the houses they live in are more often than not deteriorating, dilapidated and overcrowded," reported Dr. Samora to the Occidental College conference.

In Boyle Heights, a community of Los Angeles populated principally by Mexican Americans, the 1960 census takers found three-fourths of the residences were built prior to 1939 and 7 out of 10 homes were owned by absentee landlords. Between 1956 and 1960, there was a decline in the number of dwelling units in the area (43 less) and an increase in the local population (2,574 more people). The increased density of population was accompanied by a deterioration in the quality of the existing housing. Such areas inhabited by Mexican Americans in other parts of Greater Los Angeles are visible evidence of depressing environmental factors and sources of health and behavioral problems.

Health:

There has been a fragmentation of public health services in the Mexican American community. Overlapping functions and piecemeal programs have characterized the agencies at work in the field. Language barriers, impatience, indifference or outright hostility growing out of a lack of understanding of the mores of Spanish-speaking clients have interfered with the effectiveness of some agency personnel.

Community conferences on narcotics have been held under the stimulation of Councilman Edward R. Roybal (now Congressman) and other Mexican American leaders. Other conferences have followed on several health topics. The Occidental College conference recommended the establishment, as a pilot project, of a family health center in a Mexican American neighborhood to provide a variety of health and welfare services geared to the needs of the Mexican American. Health is a focal point of human behavior and because of the limitations imposed upon Mexican Americans by adverse conditions of income, housing and education, it requires special attention.

Conclusion:

Great strides have been made by the Mexican Americans in the Los Angeles area, particularly within the past ten years, in the social, economic and cultural life of the overall community. An increasing number of them have attained prominence in the fields of government and the learned professions. Pride in their cultural heritage has been met with public respect. Nonetheless, serious lags exist in the utilization of their employment potential, in the education of their young people, in the housing available to them and in the accommodation of public health and social services to their needs. Mexican Americans are a large ethnic group in the Los Angeles community, whose personal qualities have been samples, but by no means fully realized.

This document has been prepared for the
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